SLOT MACHINE GAME WITH USER SELECTABLE THEMES

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ABSTRACT
A slot machine method, apparatus, and computer readable storage to present a player with multiple themes simultaneously. A main window can display one screen of a slot machine game, while other windows can display derivative displays of the main window but with a transformation. The transformation can be merely visual or can also affect payouts.
FIGURE 1A

FIGURE 1B
200~
RECEIVE THEME SELECTION FROM PLAYER

202~
RETRIEVE RESPECTIVE SYMBOLS

204~
DISPLAY RESPECTIVE SYMBOLS

FIGURE 2
700~ DETERMINE SYMBOL FOR MAIN WINDOW

702~ DETERMINE CORRESPONDING SYMBOL FOR ALTERNATE THEME

704~ DETERMINE CORRESPONDING POSITION FOR CORRESPONDING SYMBOL

704~ DISPLAY CORRESPONDING SYMBOL IN CORRESPONDING POSITION

YES 706~ ADDITIONAL SYMBOLS TO PROCESS?

NO

708~ DONE

FIGURE 7
800~ DETERMINE CURRENT THEMES

802~ RECEIVE WAGER FOR EACH THEME

804~ SPIN REELS FOR ALL THEMES BEING DISPLAYED

806~ DETERMINE AND AWARD PAYOUTS FOR EACH THEME

FIGURE 8
FIGURE 11
SLOT MACHINE GAME WITH USER SELECTABLE THEMES

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This Application claims benefit of provisional application 60/863,242 which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety. This application also claims benefit of provisional application 60/869,315, which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

[0002] This Application is also related to the following nine applications identified by their application number, all nine applications are incorporated by reference herein in their entirety; Ser. Nos. 11/035,691 (“Slot Machine Game that Allows Player to Purchase Reel Respins”); 11/326,125 (“Slot Machine Bonus Game”); 11/337,960 (“Slot Machine with Skill Aspect”); 11/558,405 (“System and Method for Allowing Piggyback Wagering”); 11/609,315 (“System and Method for Allowing Piggyback Wagering”); 11/459,253 (“Slot Machine Bonus Game”); 11/558,564 (“System and Method for Administering a Progressive Jackpot Limited to a Bonus Round”); 11/11/19678,059 (“Slot Machine Game With Additional Features”); and 11/764,689 (“Slot Machine Game with Additional Award Indicator”). All nine of these applications are incorporated by reference herein in their entirety for all purposes. Any and all features of any of these applications can be combined with each other and with any feature(s) described herein.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] 1. Field of the Invention

[0004] The present inventive concept relates to a system, method, and computer readable storage for providing additional themes to slot machine games.

[0005] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0006] Slot machine games are a billion dollar industry. The current three or five reel machines have been around for a long time and some players may find current game play monotonous.

[0007] What is needed is a slot machine with additional slot machine features which will generate more excitement for players and/or more revenue as well.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] It is an aspect of the present general inventive concept to provide additional features to slot machine games.

[0009] The above aspects can also be obtained by a method that includes (a) receiving a wager from a player; (b) spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; (c) spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome; and (d) allowing the player to change the first set of reels to a third set of reels in the first window, and subsequently beginning a new game by receiving a second wager, spinning the third set of reels in the first window resulting in a third outcome and displaying a third award based on the third outcome.

[0010] The above aspects can also be obtained by a method that includes (a) receiving and resolving wagers for a first slot game using a first set of reels in a first window; (b) receiving and resolving wagers for a second slot game using a second set of reels in a second window; and (c) allowing the player to change the first set of reels in the first window to a third set of reels in the first window, the third set of reels being different than the first set of reels.

[0011] The above aspects can also be obtained by an apparatus that includes (a) a first button and a second button; (b) a storage area storing symbols associated with a first theme and symbols associated with a second theme; (c) a video output display displaying a set of reels, (d) wherein, when a player presses the first button, the video output display displays the set of reels with symbols corresponding to a first theme, and when the player pressed the second button, the video output display displays the set of reels with symbols corresponding to the second theme.

[0012] The above aspects can also be obtained by a method that includes (a) receiving a wager from a player; (b) spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and (c) spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, (d) wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on a second paytable different from the first paytable, (e) wherein all symbols in the second outcome are a respective counterpart symbol from the first outcome.

[0013] The above aspects can also be obtained by a method that includes (a) receiving a wager from a player; (b) spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and (c) spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, (d) wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on the first paytable, (e) wherein all symbols in the second outcome are a respective counterpart symbol from the first outcome.

[0014] The above aspects can also be obtained by a method that includes (a) receiving a wager from a player; (b) spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and (c) spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, (d) wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on a second paytable different from the first paytable, (f) wherein the second outcome is determined independently of the first outcome.

[0015] The above aspects can also be obtained by a method that includes (a) receiving a wager from a player; (b) spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and (c) spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, (d) wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on the first paytable, (e) wherein the second outcome is determined independently of the first outcome.

[0016] These together with other aspects and advantages which will be subsequently apparent, reside in the details of...
construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017] Further features and advantages of the present invention, as well as the structure and operation of various embodiments of the present invention, will become apparent and more readily appreciated from the following description of the preferred embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings of which:

[0018] FIG. 1A is a drawing of an output display of a slot machine result using a first theme, according to an embodiment;

[0019] FIG. 1B is a drawing of an output display of the slot machine result from FIG. 1A using a second theme, according to an embodiment;

[0020] FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating an exemplary method of displaying a theme, according to an embodiment;

[0021] FIG. 3 is a drawing of simultaneous themes being displayed, according to an embodiment;

[0022] FIG. 4 is a drawing of simultaneous themes being displayed in three dimensions, according to an embodiment;

[0023] FIG. 5 is a drawing illustrating a theme change operation from the display in FIG. 4;

[0024] FIG. 6 is a drawing illustrating corresponding symbols between different simultaneous themes, according to an embodiment;

[0025] FIG. 7 is flowchart illustrating an exemplary method of simultaneously displaying multiple themes, according to an embodiment;

[0026] FIG. 8 illustrates a flowchart illustrating an exemplary method of displaying different simultaneous themes, according to an embodiment;

[0027] FIG. 9 is a block diagram illustrating exemplary hardware that can be used to implement an embodiment;

[0028] FIG. 10 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the identical gameplay embodiment, according to an embodiment;

[0029] FIG. 11 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the different payable mapped reels embodiment, according to an embodiment;

[0030] FIG. 12 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the same payable non-predicted reels, according to an embodiment; and

[0031] FIG. 13 is a drawing of a output display illustrating the different payable non-predicted outcomes, according to an embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0032] Reference will now be made in detail to the presently preferred embodiments of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout.

[0033] Embodiments of the invention relate to slot machine games, where typically a player places a wager, presses a button to spin the reels, the reels each stop at a random position, payouts are determined by comparing all paylines played to a predetermined set of winning combinations, and then the determined payouts, if any, are awarded to the player based on the wager. Additional features can augment the excitement of a player and may also result in increased action for the casino.

[0034] A slot machine that allows a player to change themes while playing the slot machine. For example, a slot machine can have different decade themes (e.g. 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, 80’s, etc.) with symbols and music corresponding to each theme. The underlying game play remains the same.

[0035] Table I below illustrates a sample mapping of a reel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reel stop</th>
<th>Symbol id#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[0036] Table II below illustrates how the symbol ids map for two different themes (a 50’s theme and an 80’s theme). A filename may also be associated with each map to identify to the slot machine a filename of the respective symbol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol id#</th>
<th>Theme 1 image/filename</th>
<th>Theme 2 image/filename</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>blank/blank.jpg</td>
<td>blank/blank.jpg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>leather_jacket.jpg</td>
<td>CD-player/cd.jpg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>drive-in_movie.jpg</td>
<td>home_computer/hc.jpg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[0037] Thus, in this example, a slot machine has two themes (although of course a machine can have any number of themes) and the player can choose between themes by pressing a button for the theme the player wishes, even while the reels are spinning. The theme can change immediately as soon as a theme button is pressed. Music for each theme can change as well when the theme is changed. The underlying reel mappings, payouts, etc., would all remain the same even though themes can change. The only difference is the physical appearance to the player (symbol appearances, music, etc.). For example, if three leather jackets in the 50’s theme pays $100, three CD-players in the 80’s theme pays $100 as well. The symbol distribution on the reels would remain the same. This can be done in one of two ways: Using one reel mapping (as in Table I) and then map this one reel mapping to other symbols (as in Table II), or use different reel mappings (tables, etc.) for each reel, but the reel mappings should be identical to each other but for appearances of the symbols.

[0038] FIG. 1A illustrates a five reel game 108 (although any number of reels can be used) with a transportation theme. Theme buttons 100, 102, 104, 106 can have different themes written on them and can switch to their respective theme. FIG. 1B illustrates the same game but
after the “office” theme button has been pressed (for example this could be button 104), which initiates the office theme and transforms the symbols to office symbols. Note that payable for the transportation theme 110 is identical to the payable for the office theme 112, but for the symbol appearances. Thus, in this embodiment, the different themes result in the same gameplay and awards, the only difference is the visual presentation to the player (and optionally different sounds as well).

[0039] Note that each symbol in one theme has a corresponding (or counterpart) symbol in another theme. Thus, every time the ship symbol is displayed in the theme is FIG. 1A, the folder symbol is displayed in the theme displayed in FIG. 1B. Thus, in order to generate a reel for a second theme, a reel from a first theme can be copied, and all of the symbols on the reel from the first theme are changed to be their corresponding symbol from the second theme.

[0040] FIG. 2 illustrates an exemplary method for changing themes. In operation 200, the slot machine receives a theme selection from the player. This typically comprises receiving a signal that the player has pressed a theme button. The theme buttons can be physical buttons or virtual (i.e., buttons outputted on a touch screen video display that the player can touch). From operation 200, the method proceeds to operation 202, which retrieves the respective symbols for the new current theme. They can be retrieved electronically from a storage device (e.g., ROM or CD-ROM, etc.) on the machine itself. The method can proceed to operation 204, which displays the respective symbols on the machine. Audio can also be changed similarly.

[0041] FIG. 3 is a drawing of simultaneous themes being displayed, according to an embodiment.

[0042] A main window 300 displays a main slot machine game. Secondary (or additional) windows 302, 303, 304 can display the gameplay going on in the main window simultaneously with the main window but with different themes. For example, the main window displays a travel theme (slot machine symbols that relate to a travel theme), while the secondary windows display an office theme (slot machine symbols that relate to an office theme). Note that typically there would be an exact matching of symbols between themes. In other words, for each symbol in one theme, there would be a matching symbol in another theme. So, for example, in the main window (travel theme), the bicycle maps to the mouse symbol in the office theme. Thus, every symbol position that the bicycle symbol is displayed in the main window, the mouse symbol will appear in a same symbol position when the office theme is being displayed.

[0043] In the example illustrated 3, a second theme is being displayed on all three of the secondary windows 302, 303, 304. Alternatively, the second windows can each display a different theme (e.g., first secondary window 302 can display a second theme, second secondary window 303 can display a third theme, and fourth secondary window 304 can display a fourth theme, etc.) Note that each symbol on each reel stop of the five reels used for the main window 300 will correspond to each reel stop of the five reels used for the secondary window 302 (and also secondary windows 303 and 304). In this example, the gameplay in main window 300 and secondary window 302 mirror each other, since there is a unique counterpart symbol in the secondary window 302 for each symbol in the main window 300. Note that in actual implementation, reels do not have to be used for all the additional themes, in other words once an outcome for a first theme is known, the outcomes for the additional theme(s) can be determined from the first theme by using a respective counterpart symbol for each symbol in the first theme.

[0044] FIG. 4 is a drawing of simultaneous themes being displayed in three dimensions, according to an embodiment.

[0045] A front set of reels 400 displays a first (or main window) “travel” theme (containing nine symbols), a top set (an additional window) of reels 401 (containing nine symbols) displays a second “office” theme, while a right set (an additional window) of reels 402 (containing nine symbols) displays a third “body parts” theme.

[0046] The front set of reels 400 can play like a 3 by 3 slot game. The second set of reels 401 also plays like a 3 by 3 slot game, with the symbols displayed on top of a cube and mirror the front set of reels 400 by using counterpart symbols. The third set of reels 402 also plays like a 3 by 3 slot game, with the symbols displayed on the right of the cube and mirrors the front set of reels by using counterpart symbols. Typically, as the symbols on the first set of reels 401 spin, the reels on the top set of reels 401 and the right set of reels 402 spins as well. The top set of reels 401 and the right set of reels 402 each are a different theme than a theme of the front set of reels 400. Thus, each symbol in the front set of reels 400 (or first window) corresponds to a visually different symbol for the theme on the top set of reels 401 (or second window) and the right set of reels 402 (or third window).

[0047] For example, the ship symbol in the front set of reels 400 will correspond to a tape symbol in the top set of reels 401 and a solid finger pointing up symbol in the right set of reels 402. Thus, wherever a ship symbol appears in the front set of reels 400, the corresponding symbol for the other themes will appear in a respective position in the top set of reels 401 (the tape symbol) and the right set of reels 400 (the solid finger pointing up symbol). Each symbol position in the 3 by 3 grid on the front set of reels 400 maps to a respective symbol position in the top set of reels 401 and the right set of reels 402.

[0048] FIG. 5 is a drawing illustrating a theme change operation from the display in FIG. 4.

[0049] While the player is playing a game which displays different themes in respective windows, the player can change which windows display which respective themes. For example, the player can be viewing the output illustrated in FIG. 4. The player can press a “theme change button” (not pictured), and the themes can change windows (for example the output in FIG. 5 is displayed). Going from FIG. 4 to FIG. 5, the travel theme has changed from the front reels to the top reels, the body parts theme has changed from the right reels to the front reels, and the office theme has changed from the top reels to the right reels.

[0050] The player can continuously press the theme change button, upon which the themes can continuously change (shuffle) windows. For example, on the cube illustrated in FIGS. 4-5, there can actually be six themes (one theme/window for each side of the cube, thus in this example there are three hidden from view from the player). Each time the theme change button is pressed, each theme’s respective window can be increment (windows can be numbered 1-6) with the seventh window becoming the first window. Thus, after pressing the theme change button six times, the output can be returned to its original form.
The player can continuously change themes until he finds a theme mapping (each theme can be mapped to a particular window/reels) the player prefers. Additionally, more than one window may display a same theme (for example see FIG. 3).

The player may also not just shuffle themes around (as illustrated in going from FIG. 4 to FIG. 5) but entirely change one or more themes to new themes not displayed in the prior game. For example, a player can play a game with theme A in window 1, theme B in window 2, and theme C in window 3. After the player places his or her wager, spins the reels, and received any potential award, the player may change the themes to display: theme D in window 1, theme E in window 2, theme F in window 3. Alternatively, the player may change the themes to display: theme D in window 1, theme F in window 2, and theme G in window 3. Any available themes can be placed in any displayed window. Theme D can include different symbols from any of those included in other themes, for example theme C.

FIG. 6 is a drawing illustrating corresponding symbols between different simultaneous themes, according to an embodiment.

Symbol positions numbered 1-9 are the front reels (or front theme or front side). Symbol positions A-I are the top reels (or top theme or top side). Symbol positions R-Z are the right reels (or right side reels or right theme or right side theme).

Consider that, as one example, the front reels are displaying theme 1, the top reels are displaying theme 2, and the right reels are displaying theme 3. Then, the front reels can spin and stop at random positions as known in the art. The symbol in position 1 would be mapped to the corresponding symbol for theme 2, and then displayed in position A (since position A corresponds to position 1). The symbol in position 1 would also be mapped to the corresponding symbol for theme 3, and then displayed in position R (since position R corresponds to position 1). Table II below illustrates the corresponding positions for the front reels, side reels, and top reels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III below illustrates a sample mapping (or correspondence transformation) for different themes and their respective symbols.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol #</th>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>trash can</td>
<td>flat hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Plane</td>
<td>window</td>
<td>thumb pointing down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Police car</td>
<td>printer</td>
<td>ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Boat</td>
<td>tape</td>
<td>finger pointing up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, when a symbol for a particular number (e.g., #1) is displayed on a particular reel set (e.g., front reels), the corresponding symbols will be displayed in a corresponding symbol position on the other reels. For example, when symbol #2 is being displayed in reel position 9, then reel position I (the corresponding reel position) would display the symbol of the thumb pointing down (the corresponding symbol).

Aside from a cube as illustrated in FIGS. 4-6, other configurations of windows can be implemented as well. The general concept being that different windows (or sections of an output display) can be attributed to different sets of slot machine symbols, each window being used to receive a wager and make a potential payout based on results displayed in the window.

FIG. 7 is a flowchart illustrating an exemplary method of simultaneously displaying multiple themes, according to an embodiment.

The method can start with operation 700, which determines (and displays in a main window) a symbol to display for the main window. This can be done as known in the art, for example, spinning a reel (physical or virtual), determining a random reel stop to stop at (e.g., the center position), and displaying the symbols on the portion of the reel that are visible (e.g., the center position, the symbol above the center position, and the symbol below the center position). Alternative to a reel, individually spinning symbols can be used as well (e.g., symbols that each spin on their own reel, in which only one symbol on the reel is visible to the player).

Operation 701 involves our symbol is displayed for the main window. The method proceeds to operation 702, which determines a corresponding symbol for an alternate theme that is simultaneously being displayed. This can be accomplished by using a table, such as that illustrated in Tables I, III. Thus, for example, if a tape symbol is being displayed for one theme, a ship symbol can be a corresponding symbol for an alternate theme.

From operation 702, the method can proceed to operation 704, which determines a corresponding position for the corresponding symbol. This can be done by using a table, such as that exemplified in Table II. A further table or data structure can be used to map particular positions to coordinates on a display output where the corresponding symbol would then be displayed to the player in an additional window.

From operation 704, the method can proceed to operation 706, which determines, whether there are additional symbols to process. If there are additional symbols to display on the main window and/or additional symbols to display on the additional window(s) (which display the additional themes), then the method can return to operation 700.

If all of the symbols to be displayed on the entire output device have been displayed, then the method can proceed to operation 708 which ends the methods.

The method illustrated in FIG. 7 can be used to display more than one additional themes as well. For example, the main window can display a first theme, and there can be two additional windows, displaying a second theme and third theme, respectively.

It is noted that the method illustrated in FIG. 7 is merely one example of how additional theme(s) can be presented to the player. Other methods can be implemented as well. For example, the main window can be displayed. Then additional theme window(s) can be determined and
displayed (using generally the methods described herein to determine the corresponding symbol/position).

[0067] In one embodiment (an “identical gameplay embodiment”), the paytable used for an additional theme is identical to the paytable used for the main window (main theme). Thus, for example, the player could make a $1 bet on the main window and a $1 bet on an additional window (displaying an alternate theme being displayed in the main window). The payouts on both windows would be the same. This is because the amount bet is the same and the symbols between themes may differ visually in appearance but not in any other characteristic. Thus, the payouts on each theme (window) would be the same. Thus, if the player loses his $1 on the main window he would lose his $1 on the additional window. If the player wins $2 on the main window, the player would win exactly $2 on the additional window. This is because, in this embodiment, the only difference between game play of themes (windows) is the visual appearance of the symbols, and thus one window (or theme) will “mirror” one or more themes simultaneously being displayed.

[0068] A player may wish to bet different amounts (and on different paylines) between themes. If the player bets different amounts on different themes, then the payouts may be different amount themes because the player has bet a different amount. For example, if the player bets $1 on a first theme (window) and $2 on a second theme (window), then in this embodiment (where gameplay is identical but for visual appearances), then the payouts on the second window would be double the payouts on the first window. Thus, if the player wins $2.50 on the first theme, the player would win $5 on the second theme.

[0069] In another embodiment (a “different paytable mapped reels” embodiment), different paytables can be used for different themes. This can add excitement to the game. For example, if two themes are being simultaneously displayed, a first theme being displayed can pay winning combinations using a first paytable, and a second theme being displayed can pay winning combinations using a second paytable. Symbols displayed in one theme maps to (or corresponds or is predicated by) symbols of another theme. Table IV below illustrates two themes and different paytables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme A combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three boats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two planes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three bicycles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[0070] Thus, if the player is playing two themes simultaneously, the player may win different amounts based on the different winning combinations. In this embodiment, the symbols from one theme would still correspond (map) to symbols of the other themes, as described herein. Thus, the reel symbols being displayed on one window can be determined from the reel symbols being displayed on another window (by performing the mapping or correspondence transformation). The visual difference between themes (windows) in this embodiment is that symbols will appear differently from theme to theme (e.g., where a boat appears in one theme a tape would appear in a same relative position on another theme), for example see how the different themes use corresponding symbols in FIGS. 3-5. However, in this embodiment, paytables are different from theme to theme.

[0071] In a further embodiment, a paytable for one theme can simply be another theme multiplied by multiplier. For example, with regard to Theme A payouts in Table IV, an additional theme C can pay $2 for three boats, $4 for two plans, and $20 for three bicycles, which is the theme A payout multiplied by two (although of course any multiplier can be used). Thus, a main window can display a first theme, and a secondary window (and possibly additional windows as well) can display additional themes which mirror the gameplay of the first theme, although the payouts on the additional themes can be computed by multiplying the payout (or paytable) on the first theme by a multiplier. Thus, if an additional theme has a multiplier of three, then whatever the player wins on the main theme (main window), the player will win triple that win on the additional theme (window). Thus, if a player wins $1 on the main theme, the player would win $3 on the additional theme, for a total win of $4. The player would typically have to place an individual wager for each theme the player wishes to activate.

[0072] In a further embodiment ("same paytable non-predicted reels"), an identical paytable can be applied to two different themes. However, symbols displayed in one theme are not determined by results of another theme but instead are individually random. For example, Tables V and VI below each illustrate two different reels for two different themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[0073] Thus, for example the two different reel strips in Table V can be considered to correspond to one another, as a symbol on one reel triggers its corresponding symbol in the other reel.

[0074] The reels can be combined to form a slot game. For example, any one of the reels can be used three times to form a three reel slot game. Similarly, five such reels can be placed side by side to form a five reel slot game. Further, it is not required that all reels of each game be identical. Reels can be identical, or some (or all) reels on a game can be different.

[0075] Using the reels in Table VI can produce an entirely different game result, as the reels contain different frequencies of symbols and do not correspond to each other (are not
predicated on each other). The reel length in Table VI, theme B, is seven stops (symbols), while the length of Table VI, theme A is six stops.

Table VII below shows two different reels which share the same symbols but in different frequency. For example, Table VII, Theme B has two boats on the reel while theme A has one boat. Using the first reel and the second reel for two different games may produce different payouts (even if the paytable used remains the same for both reels).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stop #</th>
<th>Theme A</th>
<th>Theme B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>boat</td>
<td>blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>blank</td>
<td>boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>bicycle</td>
<td>boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>police car</td>
<td>police car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>blank</td>
<td>plane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>plane</td>
<td>bicycle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the “same paytable non-predicated reels” embodiment, the reels in different themes spin independently of one another. Thus, for example, in window one, the reel from Table V, theme A can spin randomly, while in window two, the reel from Table V, theme B can spin randomly. Or, for example, in window one, the reel from Table VI, theme A can spin randomly, while in window two, the reel from Table VI, theme B can spin randomly. In this embodiment, the reel symbols displayed are determined randomly but not based on another theme’s output.

In the “same paytable non-predicated reels” embodiment, a same paytable can be used for each theme. Different themes can use the same symbols, in which a same paytable can be used. If different symbols are used for different themes, then a same paytable can be applied to both themes, but with the symbol reflecting the symbol used for that particular theme. For example, with the reels illustrated in Table V, the paytable in Table IV can be used. This is the same paytable, just different symbols inserted to reflect the symbols used for the reels in the that theme (but the payouts are still the same). Thus, playing two themes, using the paytables illustrated in Table IV with the reels illustrated in Table V, will result in identical game-math (assuming non-weighted reels), the game math being expected return, hit frequency, etc. However, in the “same paytable non-predicated reels,” results for each theme are determined independently of each other. Thus, a player can bet $1 on Theme A and $1 on theme B, and win $50 on theme A but lost his $1 on theme B. This is because the results of each theme are random.

In a further embodiment (“different paytable non-predicated outcomes”), two or more themes can be simultaneously and independently displayed, and each theme can use a different paytable. Independentely displayed means that the outcomes for one window (a first theme) are not based (not predicated or mapped) on the outcomes on any other simultaneously displayed themes (e.g., a second theme), and vice versa. Each outcome is displayed randomly and the determination of where a reel will stop is not based on outcomes from any other outcomes being displayed in other windows, but it determined randomly. Thus, in this embodiment, if two simultaneous themes are being displayed in two separate windows (or areas on the screen), each theme can be considered like a separate slot game since there is no dependence on other outcomes to determine where each reel will stop.

FIG. 8 illustrates a flowchart illustrating an exemplary method of displaying different simultaneous themes for a slot machine game, according to an embodiment.

The method can start with operation 800, which determines the current themes to display. The themes to be displayed can be selected by a player, can be determined at random, or predetermined by the machine designers.

From operation 800, the method can proceed to operation 802, which receives a wager for each theme. The player may be required to bet a same amount on each theme (which can include betting on the same paylines for each theme).

Alternatively, the player can be allowed to bet different amounts for each theme. The player can also be allowed to bet on different paylines for each theme (and different amounts for different paylines). For example, in a two themed game, the player can bet $1 on theme 1 and $2 on theme 2. The player can also bet 10 lines on theme 1 at $0.10 each (for $1) and 5 lines of the player’s choosing on theme 2 at $0.20 each. The player can use standard graphical user interface (GUI) techniques to indicate his bet and/or selected paylines for each theme. The player can place his wager by pressing a spin button and the player’s credit meter can automatically be deducted for the total wager (aggregated wager from all of the individual themes).

Operation 804, which spins the reels for all of the themes being displayed. When the player presses a spin button, all of the lines can then spin simultaneously. Each theme can be displayed in a respective window, although this is not required. The reels for all the themes can spin and stop at random positions, or the reels in some themes may be dependent on random outcomes from other themes. For example, the reels in a main window (or first theme) can stop randomly, and the reels displayed in some or all of the other themes being displayed can be predicated (or determined) based on the random results from the first theme. In another embodiment, themes can be independent of each other.

From operation 804, the method can proceed to operation 806, which determines and awards payouts for each theme. The award for each theme can be determined based on the amount bet for each theme and the paylines selected (and amounts bet therein) for each theme. If a different paytable is used for different themes, then the respective paytable for each theme can be retrieved and applied against results received in that particular theme (window). It may be possible that the player can win different amounts for different themes. After all of the awards for each theme are aggregated, then the aggregate award (if any) can then be disbursed to the player (by adding to the player’s credit meter or physically paying the player in coins).

Thus, described herein is a slot machine apparatus, method, and computer readable storage medium that allows a player to change themes (before, during, or after a particular game). For example, the player may be allowed to change themes (for example by pressing a button) even before inserting a wager (or the player may be required to place a wager first or have money in the credit meter before being allowed to change themes). The player may also be allowed to change themes while the reels are spinning. The
player may also be allowed to change themes after a game is over (e.g., the player has played a round of the slot game by placing a wager, spinning the reels, and receiving an award).

[0087] For example, in the multiple simultaneous theme embodiment, the player can place a $2 wager ($1 each for two themes). Two windows are displayed, one for each theme. Assuming the player wins $5 on the first window and wins nothing on the second window (a net win of $3 since the player paid $2 to play the game). The player now wishes to change themes, so the player can press a button and cycle through different themes in order to find a theme the player may like. For example, if the player is a sports fan, the player may wish to select themes related to sports. Once the player has selected his or her themes, the player can play again by placing another wager, spinning the reels for both windows again, and receiving further award(s) for each of the two windows.

[0088] A theme can comprise a set of reels related to that theme, for example a football theme may use reels with some or all of its symbols involving football (e.g., a football, goal post, cleats, etc.) A theme can also include particular sounds for that theme. A theme can also include a payable for that theme. A theme may also include reel weights or other configuration parameters for that theme. Thus, each theme can be thought of as a separate slot game. Note that a set of slot reels comprises all of the reels used for the slot game. If two different themes use the same reels (e.g., five reels), then the reels are the same. If a first set of reels is not the same as a second set of reels (e.g., all the reels do not have the identical symbols in the same frequency) then the reels are not the same. For example, if theme A uses two reels (a two-reel slot game), with a first reel having the symbols: 1,2,3, and the second reel having the symbols: 4,5,6; and theme B uses two reels (a two-reel slot game), with a first reel having the symbols 1,2,3 and the second reel having the symbols, 4,5,1, then the set of reels for theme A is not the same as the set of reels for theme B. But if the second reel in theme B had the symbols 4,5,6, then both reel sets would be identical. If the frequency of symbols on a slot reel is the same but their order is different than this would not be considered the same reel (although in alternative embodiments it would be considered the same reel).

[0089] It is also noted that the player can be allowed to change themes for free. In an alternative embodiment, the player may be required to pay a fixed cost (e.g., $1, etc.) each time the player wishes to change themes. Further some themes may be free, while other themes may be required to be paid for.

[0090] In a further embodiment, a spin that results in particular symbol combinations will trigger an automatic theme change. For example, if the player gets five “7” symbols in a row (or any other combination), the theme can change to a different theme. For example, if the current theme is theme A, then upon receiving a particular predetermined combination, the theme changes to theme B, or a random theme.

[0091] FIG. 9 is a block diagram illustrating exemplary hardware that can be used to implement an embodiment.

[0092] A processing unit 900 is used to perform the methods herein using digital computer technology well known in the art. The processing unit 900 can be connected to an output 902 unit, which displays the outputs described herein and can be an LCD, touch screen display, CRT, etc. The processing unit 1220 can also be connected to an input unit 904, which can include buttons, a touch screen used to receive player selections, etc. The processing unit 900 can also be connected to a network unit 906, which can connect the electronic gaming machine (or slot machine) to a network host by a casino the slot machine is located in, which can be used to transmit player data, authenticate payouts, etc. The processing unit 900 can also be connected to a ROM 908 which can also be a CD-ROM, DVD, EPROM, or any type of storage which can be used to store data and assets needed by the processing unit to perform the methods described herein. The processing unit 900 can also be connected to a RAM 910 which is used to implement a computer program used to drive the electronic gaming machine to perform the methods described herein. The processing unit 900 can be connected to other unit 912, which can be any further component(s) known in the art which can be used with the electronic gaming device. For example, the other unit 912 can be a payment unit, which can accept payment from the player (e.g., via cash), and can pay the player (e.g., via coins) when the player wins an award. Coins can be paid directly to the player or a number of coins in an award can be added to the player’s current credit meter for later cashout.

[0093] FIG. 10 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the identical gameplay embodiment, according to an embodiment.

[0094] FIG. 10 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the identical gameplay embodiment, according to an embodiment.

[0095] Results from theme A 1000 are paid using payable A 1002. Theme B 1004 can be played simultaneously with theme A (e.g., when the player presses spin, a wager is collected and both themes spin to a stop and then are paid accordingly). Theme B 1004 results are paid using payable B 1006.

[0096] Note that the symbols displayed in theme A all correspond to a counterpart symbol in theme B. Note that payable A 1002 is also identical to payable B 1006, identical in the sense that the only difference is that counterpart symbols are used but payouts are still the same. Thus, the two games play identically, but the player may prefer to have the variety of different themes rather than watch one game.

[0097] FIG. 11 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the different payable mapped reels embodiment, according to an embodiment.

[0098] This embodiment is similar to FIG. 10, but note that payable A 1102 used to pay resulting combinations in theme A 1100 is different than payable B 1106 which is used to pay resulting combinations in theme B 1104. Thus, a combination can be a winner on payable A 1102 but the counterpart combination in another theme (the same combination but using counterpart symbols) would not be a winner using payable B 1106 (and vice versa). Thus, even though one theme produces counterpart symbols to the other theme, one theme’s final combination may produce a winning result while the counterpart theme may not, and vice versa.

[0099] Using two different paytables can provide for a more exciting game, and can also reduce the variance of the overall wager which encompasses both themes. Note that in payable B 1106, certain combinations pay as winners that
are not paid as winners in paytable A 1102. Further, some combinations pay in both themes but in different amounts (e.g., the three bicycles pays $25 in theme A, while three computer mice (the counterpart symbol to the bicycle) pays $20 in theme B.

[0100] FIG. 12 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the same paytable non-predicated reels, according to an embodiment.

[0101] Theme A 1200 is paid according to paytable A 1202, while theme B 1204 is paid according to paytable B 1206. Note that paytable A 1202 and paytable B 1206 are identical (in the sense that payouts are the same for counterpart symbols). However, the results of theme A 1200 are not dependent upon theme B 1204, and the results of theme B 1204 are not dependent on the results of theme A. Theme A and theme B produce results randomly and independent of each other.

[0102] Theme B can use the same reels as theme A but replacing the symbols in theme A with their respective counterpart symbols. Alternatively, theme B can use entirely different reels than theme A. Alternatively, theme A and theme B can use independently spinning symbols.

[0103] FIG. 13 is a drawing of an output display illustrating the different paytable non-predicated outcomes, according to an embodiment.

[0104] Theme A 1300 is paid according to paytable A 1302, while theme B 1304 is paid according to paytable B 1306. Note that paytable A 1302 and paytable B 1306 are different, there are different winning combinations (in other words a combination can be a winner on one paytable but its counterpart theme using counterpart symbols would not be a winner on another theme) and different payouts (even for combinations comprising counterpart symbols).

[0105] The results of theme A 1300 are not dependent upon theme B 1304, and the results of theme B 1304 are not dependent on the results of theme A 1302. Theme A and theme B produce results randomly and independent of each other.

[0106] Theme B can use the same reels as theme A but replacing the symbols in theme A with their respective counterpart symbols (however the reels in theme A still spin independently of Theme B thereby producing different non-predicated results). Alternatively, theme B can use entirely different reels than theme A. Alternatively, theme A and theme B can use independently spinning symbols.

[0107] Further, the order of any of the operations described herein can be performed in any order and wagers can be placed/resolved in any order. Any operation described herein can also be optional. Any embodiments herein can also be played in electronic form and programs and/or data for such can be stored on any type of computer readable storage medium (e.g. CD-ROM, DVD, disk, etc.)

[0108] The descriptions provided herein also include any hardware and/or software known in the art and needed to implement the operations described herein. All components illustrated herein may also optionally communicate with any other illustrated or described component.

[0109] The many features and advantages of the invention are apparent from the detailed specification and, thus, it is intended by the appended claims to cover all such features and advantages of the invention that fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation illustrated and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method to play a slot machine game, the method comprising:
   receiving a wager from a player;
   spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome;
   spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome; and
   allowing the player to change the first set of reels to a third set of reels in the first window, and subsequently beginning a new game by receiving a second wager, spinning the third set of reels in the first window resulting in a third outcome and displaying a third award based on the third outcome.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the allowing further comprises spinning the second set of reels in the second window simultaneously with spinning the third set of reels resulting in a fourth outcome and displaying a fourth award based on the fourth outcome.

3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the allowing further comprising spinning a fourth set of reels in the second window be a winner with spinning the third set of reels resulting in a fourth outcome and displaying a fourth award based on the fourth outcome, the fourth set of reels being different than the second set of reels.

4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on a second paytable different from the first paytable.

5. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the third award is determined based on a third paytable and the fourth award is determined based on the second paytable.

6. The method as recited in claim 5, wherein the second paytable is different from the third paytable.

7. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein all symbols in the second outcome are a respective counterpart symbol from the first outcome.

8. The method as recited in claim 4, wherein all symbols in the second outcome are a respective counterpart symbol from the first outcome.

9. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on the first paytable.

10. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein all symbols in the second outcome are a respective counterpart symbol from the first outcome.

11. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the first set of reels comprises a first reel which comprises a first particular number of occurrences of a particular symbol, and the second set of reels comprises a second reel which comprises a second particular number of occurrences of the particular symbol, the first particular number being different than the second particular number.

12. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the first reel contains at least one of all of symbols present on the second reel.
13. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first set of reels is different than the second set of reels.

14. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the first set of reels is different than the second set of reels.

15. A method to play a slot machine game, the method comprising:
   receiving and resolving wagers for a first slot game using a first set of reels in a first window;
   receiving and resolving wagers for a second slot game using a second set of reels in a second window; and
   allowing the player to change the first set of reels in the first window to a third set of reels in the first window, the third set of reels being different than the first set of reels.

16. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein wagers are resolved in the first slot game using a first paytable and wagers are resolved in the second slot game using the first paytable.

17. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein wagers are resolved in the first slot game using a first paytable and wagers are resolved in the second slot game using a second paytable, the second paytable being different than the first paytable.

18. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the second set of reels is different than the first set of reels.

19. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein the second set of reels is different than the first set of reels.

20. A method to play a slot machine game, the method comprising:
   receiving a wager from a player;
   spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and
   spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on a second paytable different from the first paytable, wherein all symbols in the second outcome are a respective counterpart symbol from the first outcome.

21. The method as recited in claim 20, wherein the second paytable is the first paytable with all payouts multiplied by a multiplier.

22. A method to play a slot machine game, the method comprising:
   receiving a wager from a player;
   spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and
   spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on the first paytable, wherein all symbols in the second outcome are a respective counterpart symbol from the first outcome.

23. A method to play a slot machine game, the method comprising:
   receiving a wager from a player;
   spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and
   spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on a second paytable different from the first paytable, wherein the second outcome is determined independently of the first outcome.

24. The method as recited in claim 23, wherein the second paytable is the first paytable with all payouts multiplied by a multiplier.

25. A method to play a slot machine game, the method comprising:
   receiving a wager from a player;
   spinning a first set of reels in a first window resulting in a first outcome and displaying a first award based on the first outcome; and
   spinning a second set of reels in a second window alongside the first window resulting in a second outcome and displaying a second award based on the second outcome, wherein the first award is determined based on a first paytable and the second award is determined based on the first paytable, wherein the second outcome is determined independently of the first outcome.